



Commandant's NOTE

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OWNING THE NIGHT

An Iraqi commander said after DESERT STORM, "When you killed my tanks before I could see you, I could not fight." And a U.S. commander said, "We enjoyed a 2,000-meter stand-off advantage against the Iraqis; they could see only 500 meters with their infrared, and we could acquire them at 2,500 meters."

These comments dramatically illustrate that U.S. forces did indeed "own the night" during operation DESERT STORM. The ability to see without being seen was a significant factor in the swift and decisive victory.

The technological advantage our forces enjoyed in Southwest Asia is the culmination of an aggressive research and development program. Although that program has produced gratifying success on a modern battlefield, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels.

We have developed and maintained an unprecedented lead in night fighting technology for both armored and aerial operations, but we have not yet exploited the technology that would give our dismounted soldiers and leaders the same capability. The inherent challenge is to fight as effectively at night as we do during the day. Dismounted Infantrymen must be able to identify their position on the ground at all times, thus enabling commanders to maintain positive command and control. We must meet these challenges both through training and through technology.

Although most units are already emphasizing night training, if we are truly going to own the night, we must conduct tough and realistic night training to

standard, under all weather conditions, and on all types of terrain.

A specific training concern that is related to night fighting and requires special emphasis is the prevention of fratricide. Although this problem also exists during the day, it is worse at night because weapon ranges can significantly exceed the shooter's ability to identify his target. Until a passive, covert identification technology can be developed, some of the most effective measures for preventing fratricide are situational awareness, enhanced individual and unit discipline, positive position identification, and the selection of recognizable and identifiable boundaries.

Especially important during night operations is the ability to navigate accurately. In Southwest Asia, the global positioning system (GPS) receivers proved their value to small-unit movement at night and during periods of limited visibility. Soon (FY 1993), the GPS receivers with dismounted forces will be smaller and lighter and will be accurate to 15 meters or less and eventually will be integrated into computer and radio systems.

The proliferation of laser technology warrants increased training emphasis on conducting operations in a laser environment. Lasers are particularly effective at night because they degrade night vision equipment and seriously affect eyes that have adjusted to night vision devices. Unprepared and untrained soldiers can suffer both physically and psychologically from the effects of laser weapons. Effective training can meet many of the challenges associated with a laser intensive environment and, at the same time, reduce the danger of fratricide.

It is imperative that we field state-of-the-art technology and do it faster than we have in the past—especially to the units that are expected to be the first to fight. The night vision capability for the dismounted infantryman is an excellent example of technology available now, or in the very near future, that could greatly increase the lethality and survivability of our soldiers.

Several Infantry School initiatives are focused on providing the dismounted infantryman with state-of-the-art equipment. For example, the Soldier Enhancement Program (SEP), which can quickly evaluate and field non-developmental (off-the-shelf) soldier items, includes five items of equipment relating to night fighting:

- The night sight bracket for the AT-4, which will allow a gunner to use the night sight from his assigned weapon on an AT-4.
- The AN/PVS-7 flip-up/down bracket, which will allow the wearer to flip his goggles up when he encounters bright light and down again as required.
- A target pointer that will allow a squad leader to designate targets for members of his squad to engage using their night vision devices.
- A common rail mount that will allow our current night sights to be installed on the new M16A3 rifle and the M4A1 carbine.
- A sniper night sight for the M24 sniper rifle that will give snipers equal capability day and night.

All of the night fighting equipment in this program will be in the field for evaluation before the end of this calendar year and should be totally fielded by 1995. If these items were to follow the normal acquisition process rather than SEP, the first fielding would be five to seven years from now and full fielding could be three to five years after that.

Another item that is not part of SEP, the AN/PAQ-4B improved aiming light, is being procured now for distribution to the field. This aiming light will be

lighter and smaller than its predecessor, the AN/PAQ-4A, and will have a range limited only by the gunner's ability to see the target.

In the long term, the Infantry School is developing the thermal weapon sight for small arms weapons. By FY 1996, this initiative will give soldiers a day/night capability that can operate through battlefield obscurants and be less susceptible to countermeasures than the image intensification devices now in use. All thermal weapon sights will have a capability to the full range of the individual or crew-served weapon.

With increased emphasis on night fighting, communications will become extremely important, especially at the squad and platoon level. Arm-and-hand signals and voice commands are certainly less effective at night and during periods of limited visibility. To fill this requirement, the AN/PRC-126—a lightweight, handheld, short-range radio—has been distributed to the field, except for units in Europe, which will receive their radios in FY 1993. In the long term, we plan to upgrade this radio to include a dual band, an increase in range, and selectable high/low power.

In addition to providing our infantrymen the best available night vision equipment, another effective method of maintaining the edge in owning the night is to degrade the enemy's ability to use his own night devices. The laser countermeasure system (LCMS) and the combat protection system (Stingray) have been developed for this purpose. These devices will give us the edge we need to locate and disrupt enemy optics and protect our forces in future night operations.

We are working hard to give our soldiers the best night fighting equipment and to develop and field that equipment faster. With this effort, coupled with increased night training, we can ensure that the U.S. Infantryman will indeed own the night.

